

**VSH Employee Futures Work Group Meeting
Friday, April 14, 2006, 2:00 – 4:00 p.m.
AHS Secretary's Conference Room**

**MINUTES
(Approved on April 28, 2006)**

Gail Rushford convened the meeting at 1:10 PM.

EMPLOYEE REPRESENTATIVES: Conor Casey, Keith Goslant, Annie Noonan,
John O'Brien, Goldie Watson

MANAGEMENT REPRESENTATIVES: Laura DeForge, Terry Rowe,
Dena Weidman, Gail Rushford

Absent: John Berard

VSH FUTURES STAFF: Judy Rosenstreich

AHS SECRETARY'S OFFICE: Cindy LaWare (present for 15 minutes)

Secretary LaWare Conversation with VSH Employees

AHS Secretary Cindy LaWare stopped in at the start of the meeting to talk with and hear from the group. The Secretary updated the group on the Futures project dialogue with the Burlington community. John asked how a Burlington location might impact families visiting patients from distant Vermont towns. The Futures plan is geographically diverse, including potential sites in Rutland and Brattleboro which might alleviate this concern. In response to Annie's question about what other issues have been raised in Burlington, the Secretary said traffic and discharge planning are topics of discussion.

Annie requested that the VSEA be advised of public meetings at which the VSH Futures project is on the agenda. Judy responded that the Mental Health Services page of the Department of Health's website has a Weekly Update posted every Friday. The agency uses this to post public meetings to which the Futures staff is officially invited to present or meetings that are commissioned by the Futures project. Such meetings have included the Burlington City Council and the Ward 1 Neighborhood Planning Assembly. Judy also informed the group that Burlington City Council agendas and NPA meetings all are posted on Burlington's website www.ci.burlington.vt.us under "City Council" and "Burlington Events." In addition, all such public meetings are listed on the "Community

Calendar” of the Burlington Free Press in the upper left hand corner on page two of the Vermont section.

Secretary LaWare said that the Futures team is following this process, using the Weekly Update, to inform a wide audience of interested stakeholders.

Terry stated that all VSH staff receive hard copies of the Weekly Update to which Judy referred. These are placed in their mail boxes weekly and many employees are tossing them into recycling because the material is voluminous.

Annie questioned the Secretary as to why the state is not feverishly trying to re-certify VSH. She also is concerned about transparency and wants to know about meetings with public bodies such as the City Council and Ward 1. Annie asked Secretary LaWare to incorporate the skilled, dedicated workforce of the Vermont State Hospital into Futures’ plans. Annie’s final point was to urge the Secretary to not concede the state’s power to Fletcher Allen in bargaining over collaboration for inpatient psychiatric services.

Approval of Minutes

Judy emailed the minutes of April 7 prior to today’s meeting and heard one response. VSEA did not receive them due to a spam filter in their email system. Consequently, considerable time was spent reading and discussing the minutes. Changes were noted.

- Annie moved / Keith seconded to approve the minutes of April 7 with the changes indicated. Voting in favor: 9 Opposed: 0

Judy indicated that the Futures Project follows the practice of posting minutes on the Weekly Update to provide a large, diverse group of stakeholders with timely information about the project. If there are revisions to minutes, they will be posted again as finalized.

Policy on Reimbursement of Expenses

Judy brought back information regarding the extent to which the Division of Mental Health / Futures Project provides reimbursement of expenses for those who volunteer to serve on advisory committees and work groups. This was in response to Annie’s request of Deputy Secretary Steve Gold to consider the time and expense that may be necessary for work group members to investigate and research issues associated with the tasks at hand. She requested mileage reimbursement and time off from work without loss of pay and benefits for travel associated with the work group’s charge. Annie gave examples of travel which VSEA may deem necessary to research pertinent issues: travel out of state to a free-standing psychiatric hospital, travel to Fletcher Allen Health Care, or other travel within Vermont or potentially out of state.

Judy advised that the Mental Health Division provides an honorarium to a consumer of mental health services or to a family member who is not otherwise on a salary to attend a conference or meeting when consumer and/or family representation is beneficial. Basic

refreshments at meetings also are provided. Terry stated her opinion that this committee is a work activity that may qualify for mileage reimbursement from the VSH budget and/or use of VSH vehicles. Annie stated that she wants employee representatives to this committee to be granted time off for work related to this committee including visits such as to the New Hampshire State Hospital and that VSEA is willing to share expenses or to cover expenses as necessary.

Checking In and Stating Hopes / Concerns

Gail asked each person to state their hopes/concerns for this project.

John O'Brien expressed concern that VSH employees are able to remain intact as a workforce. The people are the hospital, not the building, he said. The Burlington Free Press reported that VSH was a disgrace twenty years ago, it is a disgrace now. But there is nothing disgraceful about the care provided. He is struck daily by the talent and good hearts of the people.

Goldie Watson hopes that (1) state jobs are preserved, (2) VSH employees continue to serve our clients, (3) the larger community sees VSH employees as a valuable resource, and (4) the patients will not be turned over to staff less dedicated to them.

Terry Rowe said that staff at VSH are very concerned...have very strong feelings. I am here to make sure that we roll out every possible scenario and to make sure that everyone has jobs so they can feed their families. Staffing and jobs are foremost concern.

Laura DeForge I hope that we can get together as a group despite our affiliation / bias. This is important work that has to be done.

Gail Rushford I hope that we have a productive time together. We must do a thorough job of assessing the options we focus on.

Conor Casey I hope to answer one of the biggest questions in this whole process: to make sure that everyone has a sense of security.

Judy Rosenstreich My goal is to lend support to this process, to offer insights and ideas, and to help us to work through the issues. I am impressed with the collective knowledge and experiences among us and hope that we can work together to craft recommendations.

Dena Weidman My concern is the unknowns...the when and the where. I also am concerned about Fletcher Allen's (or another hospital's) position on the potential employment of psychiatric technicians.

Keith Goslant I am thinking that we have staff who have given years of service and should be given credit for their training.

Annie Noonan Staff morale is a concern. Most employees do an incredible job. Under funding and understaffing has had a huge effect on staff morale. The hospital is not just a building. Every time something gets released, it's another blow. People need to plan their futures.

Gail advised that John Berard, a member of the work group who works in labor relations for the department of Human Resource Development, cannot attend today's meeting or to the next one on April 21st. He also was not at the first meeting. Gail expects him at the April 28th meeting.

Judy asked Conor for the legislative language that he was to bring to the meeting. Conor said that he will e-mail it to us before the next meeting.

Identifying Staffing Options

Gail facilitated a group process in which individuals would first spend some private time considering ideas for a future in which the psychiatric care services currently provided at VSH would be provided at a new facility. Following this, Gail asked the work group to share their ideas with a partner. A brainstorming session followed and Gail recorded all ideas. These are attached to the minutes as an addendum on page 5.

The meeting adjourned at 4:00 PM.

Note: The VSH Employees Futures Work Group will meet on April 21, 2006, 2:00-4:00, in the Secretary's Conference Room, Waterbury.

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VSH Employees Futures Work Group
Addendum to Minutes of April 14, 2006

Brainstorm Activity – List of Possible Options for Staffing

1. State owned/run facility staffed by state employees
2. Public/private partnership with state staff in a state-of-the-art facility
3. Privatize with agreement to hire trained staff with guaranteed salary/benefits (state)
4. Educational options for staff
 - a. LPN
 - b. Licensed MH Workers
 - c. Marketable KSA's
5. Reopen VSEA contract and/or introduce legislation with the primary facility at FAHC. Issues include:
 - a. Protection of VSH retirement benefits
 - b. Extend benefits such as health care
 - c. Hardship supplement (ie, for transportation/commuting)
 - d. Credit for sick leave (retirement)
6. FAHC gives hiring preference to VSH staff
7. Follow the contract (ie, RIF rights)
8. Training to prepare staff for change, placement in new jobs
 - a. Preference in tuition reimbursement
 - b. Mentoring program
9. Reinstate LNA program
10. Short & long term goals planned related to transition timeframes
11. Analysis of job market and related skill acquisition
12. Entire MH system (including subacute facilities) hires state employees – state subsidizes to maintain rate of pay
13. Comparable pay scales in community mental health

14. Staff attrition puts VSH in crisis